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Chairman: Mr. Loedel ..... (Uruguay)

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03-54262 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

Election of a Vice-Chairman

2. **Ms. Ferrari** (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) nominated Mr. Lamba (Malawi) for the post of Vice-Chairman.

3. *Mr. Lamba (Malawi) was elected Vice-Chairman by acclamation.*

Agenda item 19: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (A/58/23 (part II), chap. VIII-X, A/58/23 (part III), chap. XII (sect. D-F), A/58/171; aide-memoire 1/03)

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Agenda item 89: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations (A/58/23 (part II), chap. VI, A/57/23 (part III), chap. XII (sect. C), A/58/66; A/C.4/58/CRP.1)

Agenda item 12: Report of the Economic and Social Council (A/58/23 (part II), chap. VI, A/57/23 (part III), chap. XII (sect. C), A/58/66; A/C.4/58/CRP.1)

Agenda item 90: Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories (A/58/71)

4. **The Chairman** said that it was due to the untiring efforts of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples that many of the 191 Member States were now represented as free and independent States. The sterling work accomplished by the Special Committee was one of the greatest successes of the United Nations since its inception.

5. **Mr. Mekdad** (Syrian Arab Republic), Rapporteur of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, introduced the report of the Special Committee on its work during 2003 (A/58/23). The Special Committee's recommendations were contained in part III of the report.

6. In 2003, for the first time in its history, the Special Committee had held its annual Seminar in a Non-Self-Governing Territory, Anguilla. He noted that the attendance at the Seminar had been unprecedented. He welcomed the cooperation shown by the administering Power and the Government of Anguilla, which had contributed to the success of the Seminar.

7. During the period under review, the Special Committee had been guided in its work by the goals of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism and the Plan of Action, which contained specific recommendations for the administering Powers, the specialized agencies and other bodies of the United Nations system, as well as other entities, in order to expedite the end of colonialism.

8. The Special Committee attached great importance to the intensification of dialogue and cooperation with the administering Powers for the purpose of achieving decolonization of the Non-Self-Governing Territories remaining on the list. Those contacts had been particularly fruitful in the case of New Zealand and the Tokelau Islands. The visiting mission which had gone to the Territory in 2002 had recommended that a study should be conducted on the self-determination options and their implications. The Special Committee was waiting for the terms of reference for the study, which the United Nations Development Programme stood ready to finance, to be finalized.

9. The United Kingdom and the United States had continued their informal contacts and consultations with the Special Committee. The participation by a high-level representative of the United Kingdom in the seminar in Anguilla had proved to be highly beneficial for the representatives of the Special Committee and for the participants from the Non-Self-Governing Territories. In 2004, the Special Committee intended to

broaden the dialogue with the administering Powers and it hoped that their cooperation would eventually lead to their formal participation in the work of the Special Committee.

10. With respect to visiting missions, the Special Committee continued to attach the utmost importance to such missions as a primary source of information about the wishes and aspirations of the peoples in the Non-Self-Governing Territories. It intended to continue to seek the cooperation of the administering Powers in that area.

11. **Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoué** (Côte d'Ivoire), Acting Chairman of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, gave a brief overview of the activities of the Special Committee since the start of 2003.

12. Three years into the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories were still on the Special Committee's list. The Special Committee therefore continued to fulfil its mandate to review the information transmitted by the administering Powers under article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations.

13. The regional seminars held each year offered a valuable opportunity for the representatives of the Territories, as well as for experts and non-governmental organizations, to highlight the particular political and socio-economic problems facing the Territories, and for the Special Committee to inform participants about its work. The 2003 Seminar had been held for the first time in one of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, Anguilla, thanks to the prior support of the administering Power and the cooperation of the Territorial Government. The main focus of the Seminar had been the process of decolonization in the Caribbean Territories and Bermuda, and the new format had led to a fruitful dialogue. On its return to New York, the Special Committee had adopted the substantive recommendations and conclusions of the Seminar and had held its June session.

14. The Chairman of the Special Committee had followed up on the Seminar's recommendations by requesting that talks should be held with representatives of the United Kingdom concerning the process of constitutional modernization in the Caribbean Territories and Bermuda, on the basis of the principle of self-determination established by the United Nations. A similar approach had been taken with the representatives of the United States of America regarding the decolonization process in American Samoa. The initial reaction of both administering Powers had been positive. In that regard, the Special Committee continued to enjoy the active and long-standing cooperation of New Zealand and of the representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territory of Tokelau.

15. He urged the members of the Fourth Committee to take a positive view of the recommendations submitted to the General Assembly by the Special Committee.

16. **Mr. Balarezo** (Peru), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Rio Group, said that one of the main objectives of the United Nations had been to ensure that the peoples of the world could exercise the greatest possible degree of self-government. Thanks to the efforts of the Organization, over 80 million people had been able to exercise their right to self-determination. It was thus undeniable that the process of decolonization had been one of the greatest achievements of the United Nations.

17. Recalling the important role played by the Special Committee, he said that it was essential to implement the Special Committee's recommendations and he appealed to the administering Powers and the States concerned to do so without delay since, as stated in resolution 1514 (XV), the continued existence of colonialism was "contrary to the Charter of the United Nations and an impediment to the promotion of world peace and cooperation".

18. With respect to the remaining colonial situations, the States members of the Rio Group wished to state the following: (a) the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom should, as soon as possible, resume negotiations aimed at finding a just, peaceful, and lasting solution to the dispute over sovereignty of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas), South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands; (b) with regard to the Caribbean Territories the Rio Group welcomed the holding of the 2003 Seminar on decolonization held in the Non-Self-Governing Territory of Anguilla and hoped that its conclusions and recommendations would be implemented without further delay; and (c) with regard to Western Sahara, the Rio Group reaffirmed the responsibility of the United Nations to help the Saharan people to exercise their right to self-determination

through a just, mutually acceptable and durable solution.

19. Lastly, he reiterated the commitment of the States members of the Rio Group to the definitive elimination of colonialism in all its forms, and urged all States Members of the United Nations to work together constructively and unreservedly with a view to achieving that goal before the end of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism.

20. **Mr. Requeijo** (Cuba) said that decolonization had made little progress in recent years and that the list of remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories had barely changed. That was not surprising, however, since certain administrating Powers continued to use all kinds of pretexts to justify their refusal to bring a definitive end to colonialism; refused to maintain official working relations with the Special Committee on decolonization, and hindered its work, for instance by launching disinformation campaigns to distort its purposes; tried to find ways to remove their colonial Territories from the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories; and even tried to discredit the work of the Fourth Committee by proposing, within the context of the consideration of the revitalization of the bodies of the General Assembly, that it should be either disbanded or merged with other Committees, as if the questions it considered were not sufficiently relevant or important.

21. Yet, as indicated in the report of the Secretary-General on information from Non-Self-Governing Territories (A/58/69), some administering Powers continued to behave like colonial Powers by conducting military manoeuvres in Non-Self-Governing Territories under their jurisdiction, thereby causing serious harm to the health of their inhabitants and seriously damaging their ecological systems, and by shamefully exploiting their land and maritime resources, in flagrant violation of General Assembly resolution 2621 (XXV).

22. In order to remedy that situation, the United Nations should continue to give active consideration to the decolonization question. In that regard, the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism should not simply become another agenda item to be considered only when reaching its conclusion. Moreover, priority should continue to be given to the holding of regional seminars on decolonization — the most recent of which, held in Anguilla, had been the first to be held in a Non-Self-Governing Territory — and the Department of Public Information should give priority to the dissemination of their outcomes, not only on the web site of the Special Committee on decolonization, but also among States Members of the Organization through the proper use of the media. Similarly, ways should be found to increase the educational and vocational training opportunities available to young people in the Non-Self-Governing Territories, which were still far from adequate. Member States with the necessary economic resources, in particular, should address that question.

23. His delegation welcomed the adoption of the series of resolutions recognizing the inalienable right of the Puerto Rican people to self-determination and independence. It also welcomed the consensus achieved on the resolution concerning Puerto Rico submitted to the Special Committee in June 2002. The withdrawal of the United States Navy from the Puerto Rican island of Vieques in May 2002 represented a clear victory for the Puerto Rican people and for all the countries that had supported it. However, the question of the clean-up of the island and the transfer of the former firing range to the local authorities remained unresolved.

24. His delegation also wished to express its deep concern about the obvious stalemate in the Western Sahara peace process, which was preventing the establishment of a lasting peace in the region and continuing to exacerbate the living conditions of the Saharan people. It also wished to reaffirm its belief that the holding of a fair, transparent and impartial referendum under United Nations auspices, and strict adherence to the Settlement Plan for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara, the Houston Accords, and the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions were the only ways to ensure an honourable settlement of the conflict. Similarly, his delegation wished to reaffirm the legitimacy of Argentina's claim to sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands (Falklands) and urged the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom to pursue negotiations with a view to achieving a just, peaceful and honourable settlement of their dispute. It also called upon the administering Power of Guam to cooperate fully with the Committee.

25. **Ms. Rivero** (Uruguay), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Southern Common Market

(MERCOSUR) (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay) and its associated States (Bolivia and Chile), said that the States in question wished to associate themselves with the previous statement made by the representative of Peru on behalf of the Rio Group. They strongly supported the decolonization process and the work of the Special Committee. She wished in particular to refer to a special colonial situation which was still unresolved, namely, that of the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia, and the South Sandwich Islands, as well as the surrounding maritime zone, which had long been the subject of a sovereignty dispute between Argentina and the United Kingdom. The General Assembly, the Special Committee and the Organization of American States had adopted numerous resolutions on the subject.

26. MERCOSUR and its associated States were directly concerned by the problem, which not only prolonged an abnormal and unjust situation for Argentina, but also hampered their plan to transform the South Atlantic region into a genuine zone of peace. They would continue to be fully supportive of efforts to bring a definitive end to that anachronistic colonial situation and reaffirmed the terms of the statements they had made regarding the Malvinas Islands, which had been adopted at the meetings of the Presidents of the MERCOSUR countries, Bolivia and Chile, in 1996 and 1999.

27. **Mr. Alcalay** (Venezuela) fully endorsed the statement made by the representative of Peru on behalf of the States members of the Rio Group. Having changed its working methods with a view to improving its effectiveness, the Special Committee on decolonization was now in a position to look at the political, economic and social situation of each Non-Self-Governing Territory, an essential prerequisite of it was to fully understand their specific characteristics and recommend measures that were appropriate to each. And yet, some thought that the Committee did little for some of those Territories, while others even believed that the Committee was just wasting its time adopting, year after year, resolutions that had no effect. Those judgements were unfair and were sometimes the result of poor information. The results achieved by the Special Committee since its inception were clear for all to see, as demonstrated by the gratitude expressed to the Special Committee by those who had benefited directly from its actions. It was merely a question of overcoming the obstacles that had prevented the full implementation of the resolutions on decolonization, and the Special Committee must continue to play a central role in that process.

28. With respect to the 16 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories, his delegation wished to reaffirm its support for Argentina in its struggle to assert its sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands. It once again urged the parties concerned to resume negotiations, believing that dialogue at the highest level and increasingly close cooperation between the Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom offered the necessary conditions for the opening of talks. With regard to the decolonization of Western Sahara, his delegation reiterated its support for the holding of a fair and impartial referendum in the near future. It believed that the Saharan people must be able to exercise freely their inalienable right to determine their own destiny, and urged the parties concerned to cooperate with the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy in order to find a peaceful, fair, and lasting solution to the conflict.

29. **Mr. Awad** (Egypt) welcomed the idea of organizing consultations among Member States in order to reach agreement on a review of the agenda items allocated to the Fourth Committee. His delegation looked forward to participating in any such consultations. In that context, he said that the Committee must bear in mind the statements made by delegates in plenary meetings during the two weeks of the General Assembly's general debate with regard to the issues of reform and modernization and the need to bring about the desired changes in various aspects of the Organization's work, as well as in the process by which its subsidiary bodies considered essential international issues, with a view to strengthening the two concepts of pluralism and collective action and consolidating the fundamental principles set forth in the Charter. The events which the world had witnessed during the past year confirmed that many of the issues before the Fourth Committee must be approached from both a philosophical and a practical angle, in a complementary and balanced manner, in particular the issue of the eradication of colonialism and the right of colonial peoples to self-determination and to sovereignty over their Territory.

30. The Special Committee had made recommendations concerning the dissemination of information relating to the eradication of colonialism in its annual report. In that connection, he stressed the

need for the Organization to act more effectively to mobilize world public opinion and provide peoples subjected to foreign occupation with the means to increase awareness of their legitimate struggle for independence. It was also just as necessary to increase awareness of the Organization's activities in that area, given that all colonial situations and efforts made to eliminate them must be managed in an even-handed manner, without giving priority to any particular geographical zone or to issues determined by their relationship to others. There must therefore be continuous and constructive communication and exchanges of views between the Special Committee and the Secretariat Departments for Political Affairs and for Public Information, in order to determine the best method for achieving the objectives of the Declaration on decolonization, and to define a clear policy and information vision which would consolidate the principles of the Charter and lead to peaceful action to increase awareness of the rights and suffering of those peoples, in particular with regard to their right to sovereignty over their Territory. The Organization could use various instruments for that purpose in order to obtain the best possible results. Cooperation between the United Nations and civil society and the regional organizations concerned was equally important, given the skills of the latter organizations and their potential influence.

31. Particular importance must be given to the evaluation of the effectiveness of and need for visiting missions to the Non-Self-Governing Territories. Although such missions were undeniably a useful instrument for ascertaining the true situation in the Territories, it was important to study the best means of defining their mandates and objectives, as well as the most appropriate time to send them to the field. In parallel to that internal effort, continuous consultations should be initiated between the Special Committee and the administering Powers with a view to facilitating the task of visiting missions. By the same token, the administering Powers' responsibility to provide the Special Committee with adequate information on the changing political, economic and juridical situation in the Territories must be stressed. He underscored the need for the administering Powers to submit their reports to the Secretariat within the deadlines set by the relevant decisions of the Special Committee and the General Assembly.

32. Turning to the critical issue of economic and other activities which adversely affected the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, he emphasized the international community's responsibility in that regard and the need to affirm yet again the principles reaffirmed in many resolutions of the General Assembly. Every effort must be made to strengthen the capacity of colonial peoples to develop their economic resources. At the same time there was a need to protect the cultural heritage and civilization of the inhabitants of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. That would require action on the part of the international community.

33. The role of the specialized agencies and the regional and international organizations concerned, which had a central role to play in helping the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories to assume responsibility for the administration of their Territories and benefit fully from their resources, must be broadened and strengthened. That would require practical cooperation on the part of the administering Power and a firm commitment from international donors. Given the special geographical, environmental and topographical characteristics of many Non-Self-Governing Territories, their development could not be sustained without the practical participation of the specialized agencies and the United Nations system in general in the planning and execution of economic and social development projects. There must therefore be coordination among those institutions themselves and between them and the competent regional organizations in order to ensure that projects were complementary and that the population derived maximum benefit from them.

34. The draft resolution proposed for adoption by the General Assembly was certainly important in that it highlighted environmental protection, the alleviation of the effects of natural disasters, the control of drug trafficking and the fight against the illicit exploitation of marine resources, but other areas should receive the same attention, in particular the creation of basic services, vocational training and communications. Scholarships and grants provided by Member States for education and training for the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories must reflect new development requirements and changes in the concept of capacity-building in a more general sense, as well as the particular needs of each society. As one of the 56 countries which offered such assistance, Egypt hoped

that the system for submitting applications through the United Nations would be improved, so that as many candidates as possible could take advantage of the facilities offered.

35. He reaffirmed that the effectiveness of the decolonization process, in accordance with the Declaration and relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, was closely linked to the question of an effective mechanism for follow-up and review by the Special Committee and under the close monitoring of the General Assembly.

36. **Mr. Assaf** (Lebanon) thanked the Special Committee for the work it had done and for the proposals and recommendations it had made. After reviewing the historical background to colonialism, he said that the phenomenon, the decline of which had begun to accelerate at the end of the Second World War, survived to the present day, since 16 Territories remained on the Special Committee's list and were still waiting to exercise their right to self-determination. That was why the General Assembly, in resolution 55/146, had declared the period 2001-2010 the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism.

37. The United Nations had clearly marked out the path that people should follow in order to gain their freedom, and colonizing States should respect the principles that the Organization had established in that regard. The principle of self-determination, embodied in Article 1 of the Charter, had been reaffirmed in the 1960 Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, which characterized the domination and exploitation of peoples as a flagrant violation of fundamental human rights, and in resolution 1541 (XV), which established the political framework that colonial Territories could adopt. Moreover, Chapter XI of the Charter, which was devoted to the Non-Self-Governing Territories, called on the administering Powers to develop the political, economic and social structures of colonial peoples in preparation for independence.

38. It was not possible to talk of eradicating colonialism and granting colonial peoples the right to self-determination without mentioning the fate of the Palestinian people; Israel had deprived it of its rights, occupied its territory and destroyed its institutions. In that regard, it was important to reaffirm the responsibility that the Organization bore for ensuring that the Palestinian people was able to exercise its right to self-determination and establish a State and for allowing the refugees to return. Mention should also be made of the phenomenon known as neocolonialism, meaning the exploitation of poor countries by certain rich countries and the economic domination imposed on the countries of the South by certain countries of the North, and of the need to combat that phenomenon and to help developing countries to overcome it. The Special Committee was firmly on the side of colonial peoples, and it was to be hoped that, by the end of the Second International Decade, the last of the colonial Territories would have been removed from the Special Committee's list.

39. **Mr. Fadaifard** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, three years after the proclamation of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, there were still 16 Territories on the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories. About 2 million people living in those Territories continued to struggle for self-determination and they rightly expected the United Nations to play its cardinal role in the decolonization process and to intensify its efforts towards that end. A solution to the problem of the Territories concerned could be found through the full implementation of the Plan of Action for the Decade and the adoption of a pragmatic approach.

40. The Special Committee should continue to promote the decolonization process and to monitor developments in the Non-Self-Governing Territories, whose peoples should be fully informed of the range of options that self-determination offered them. However, the importance of the Special Committee's case-by-case approach should be underscored. Any new initiative should be in line with the Committee's traditional practices and should do nothing to complicate further the process of decolonization of certain Territories.

41. Greater cooperation with the administering Powers in the development of work programmes for the remaining Territories was a crucial factor in the current decolonization process. His delegation welcomed the cooperation that the United Kingdom had shown in the holding of the regional Seminar in Anguilla. It hoped that, in that same spirit of cooperation, periodic visiting missions could be sent to the Territories and that the information required under Article 73 *e* would be submitted on a regular basis. The positive experience of the Anguilla Seminar would

encourage the holding of future seminars in the Non-Self-Governing Territories in the Caribbean and the Pacific regions.

42. As a member of the Special Committee, his delegation was determined to continue to fulfil its responsibilities. It viewed as an important initiative the Chairman's proposal for the development of a programme of work based on a case-by-case approach, together with a precise timetable for the completion of the decolonization process by the end of the Second Decade.

43. **Mr. Pisa** (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) said that, since the Committee's session the previous year, a number of significant developments had taken place with regard to the Non-Self-Governing Territories administered by the United Kingdom. Following the adoption in 2002 of the British Overseas Territories Act, which granted all citizens of those Territories full British citizenship, the right of abode in the United Kingdom and freedom of movement within the European Union, a number of citizens from the British Overseas Territories had applied for British passports. While the number had not been as high as had been anticipated, it had nevertheless been impressive, since over 14,000 passports had been issued by August 2003.

44. At the political level, constitutional reviews were under way in certain Territories (the Cayman Islands, the Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, Montserrat and the Turks and Caicos Islands); in others, a committee was canvassing the population's views on that issue (Anguilla) or the constitutional review commission would be established in the near future (the British Virgin Islands). Elections had been held in Bermuda, the Turks and Caicos Islands and the British Virgin Islands, and Saint Helena was planning to adopt to a new form of government.

45. As for environmental management in the Overseas Territories, his Government was working closely with the Territories in order to fulfil the commitments it had entered into under multilateral environmental agreements and to support the efforts of the Territories themselves to protect and improve their environment. His Government, which had participated fully in a major environmental conference held in Bermuda in March 2003, hoped shortly to announce the provision of additional funds to support environmental work in the Territories and the implementation of the Environment Charters for the Overseas Territories, signed in 2001.

46. On the economic level, his Government was assisting Bermuda, which had been devastated by a hurricane the previous month, and Montserrat, where the collapse in July 2003 of the dome of the Soufrière volcano had caused widespread damage. The United Kingdom was also endeavouring to help certain Territories to obtain economic and trade assistance from the European Union.

47. In terms of the Committee's specific interests, the most significant development had been the decolonization Seminar held in Anguilla from 20 to 22 May 2003 under the auspices of the Special Committee on decolonization. That had been the first time that the Special Committee's annual Seminar had been held in a British Non-Self-Governing Territory. The Seminar, which had been characterized by some frank and at times lively exchanges between representatives of the Territory, the United Kingdom and the members of the Special Committee on decolonization, had enabled all those involved to be better informed about their respective positions. It had shown the extent to which the United Kingdom's Overseas Territories were developing dynamically and enjoying a high degree of self-government; that in turn had a favourable impact on work of the Special Committee on decolonization concerning the de-listing of some Non-Self-Governing Territories. In that context, the representative of the United Kingdom at the Seminar had taken the opportunity to state that, while his Government's policy of informal cooperation with the Special Committee remained unchanged, it would where possible help it to carry out its mandate under General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) and 1541 (XV).

48. The next meeting of the Overseas Territories Consultative Council, to be held in London in December 2003, would provide an opportunity for further discussion of the relationship between the United Kingdom and the Overseas Territories, which allowed the Territories to exercise their right to self-determination and to run their own affairs to the greatest possible extent. There seemed to be no strong desire in the Territories to choose the path of independence, although his Government had made clear that it would give every encouragement if they chose to do so, where independence was an option. The key therefore, as long as the Territories chose to retain their links with the United Kingdom, would be to try to

reconcile their desire for greater autonomy with the United Kingdom's responsibility to ensure good governance, to protect the impartiality of the public service and the independence of the judiciary, and to ensure compliance with international obligations.

49. **Mr. Percaya** (Indonesia) said that his Government attached great importance to the full implementation of the resolutions on the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. The Indonesian Constitution solemnly stated that independence was the right of all nations. Since the historic adoption by the General Assembly of resolutions 1514 (XV) and 1541 (XV), much had been achieved in the implementation of the goals which constituted the Committee's mandate. The record spoke for itself.

50. Most of the 114 Territories subject to Trusteeship Agreements or included in the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories since 1945 had become independent, been integrated into the administering Powers or entered into free association. That meant that the Committee's mandate must be pursued until the remaining 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories had achieved self-determination.

51. His delegation noted that the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism would end in 2010. The Committee must therefore pursue its decolonization task with renewed determination in order to complete it within the remaining seven years.

52. His delegation had always shared the Committee's view that each case of decolonization must be dealt with separately and that no universal criteria could be applied. That was why it had always been committed to a comprehensive solution based on the specific characteristics of each of the remaining 16 Territories. It believed, however, that through the implementation of the relevant United Nations resolutions, the principles of the Charter and international law, the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories would soon enjoy self-determination, leading to the completion of the Committee's mandate.

53. His delegation welcomed the first-ever convening of the Caribbean Regional Seminar on Advancing the Decolonization Process in one of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, in Anguilla in May 2003. That clearly indicated that the administering Powers had a critical role to play in the process.

54. Member States should help the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories to achieve their full political, economic and social potential; it should be possible to achieve that within the second Decade if Member States redoubled their efforts. Everything depended on the commitment and cooperation of all the parties involved, in particular the United Nations and its specialized agencies. It was the latter's particular responsibility to continue to offer assistance to Non-Self-Governing Territories, as they had successfully done to date. Of particular importance was the agencies' role in implementing the manpower and educational development programmes needed by the Territories. He hoped that the Committee would be able to cooperate with the specialized agencies in that respect.

55. While he reaffirmed Indonesia's commitment to the strengthening of the role, capacity and effectiveness of the United Nations, he said that his delegation intended to play a more active role in the Committee in order to help it to improve its performance, realize its full potential and respond more effectively to the challenges of the future.

56. **Mr. Zhang** Yishan (China) said that the Committee's work continued to underlie the endeavours of the United Nations to help colonial countries and peoples to exercise their right to self-determination and to strive for independence. The historic Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, adopted in 1960, had served to accelerate the decolonization process across the world. Historic achievements had been made with the assistance of the United Nations, marking a success for the Organization, as the Secretary-General had pointed out.

57. There were 2 million people living in 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories. The Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism reflected the common aspiration of the Member States to reach an early conclusion to the decolonization process. It was therefore the duty of the Member States to attach the proper importance to the rights and interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and to help them to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the Declaration. The Fourth Committee bore the major responsibility in that regard. His delegation supported the proposal put forward by the Secretary-General in his letter

addressed to the Anguilla Seminar held in May, urging the Special Committee to continue its efforts to devise an appropriate format and timetable for the decolonization of each Territory. It looked forward to closer cooperation between the administering Powers and the United Nations.

58. The administering Powers should strike a balance between achieving the social, economic, cultural and educational development of the Non-Self-Governing Territories — most of which were small and had very fragile ecosystems — and protecting their natural and human resources.

59. His Government had consistently supported the efforts of the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories to exercise their right to self-determination. His delegation would continue to participate actively in the work of the United Nations in that field and to cooperate closely with other members of the Committee in order to fulfil the historic mission set out in the Charter and the Declaration.

60. **Ms. Seth** (Antigua and Barbuda), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), noted that the issue of decolonization was not only unfinished business of the United Nations, but was also a larger issue for Latin America and the Caribbean, insofar as eight of the 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories were in the Americas and seven of them were small island developing countries in the Caribbean. The Caribbean Community therefore took more than a passing interest in the political, socio-economic and constitutional development of those Territories.

61. Bermuda's accession to CARICOM in July had brought to six the number of Caribbean Territories that had achieved either associate or full membership status; the admission of a seventh was pending and was likely to be approved. To varying degrees, all those Territories were members of regional bodies. Three of them were associated with the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and two — Anguilla and Montserrat — shared a common currency with their independent neighbours. They were an integral part of the Caribbean regional integration movement and their transition from political dependency to full self-government would benefit not only the Territories themselves, but also the wider region as a whole.

62. The realization of the universal right to self-determination for the peoples of the 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories continued to be impeded in large measure by the information deficit among the people of the Territories and among the Member States themselves. That was largely the result of the partial and incomplete implementation of the Plan of Action for the two International Decades for the Eradication of Colonialism. As the representative of one Caribbean Non-Self-Governing Territory had told the Special Committee on decolonization in June 2003, the creation of political education in the Territories was critical to their development process, and their constitutional and political advancement depended on the dissemination of unbiased information about the legitimate alternatives available to them (independence, free association and integration). That had not occurred.

63. Moreover, Member States lacked adequate information on the contemporary colonial dynamic in the Territories. Yet, such information was critical if one was to understand the often complex nature of the situation on the ground and to make informed decisions, in the Committee, to bridge the democratic deficit inherent in even the most benevolent colonial models. Indeed, the dissemination of information on decolonization was lacking on all sides and the United Nations machinery responsible for analysing the situation in those Territories and for disseminating that information needed to accelerate its efforts to fulfil its mandate.

64. She stressed the importance of regional seminars that helped to bridge the information gap. The holding of the 2003 Seminar in Anguilla, a Non-Self-Governing Territory, had been an historic first. The Caribbean Community congratulated the Government of Anguilla on having provided excellent facilities and commended the United Kingdom Government for the flexibility and foresight it had shown in agreeing to the bold proposal made by the Chairman of the Special Committee on decolonization. The United Kingdom representative at the Seminar should also be commended for his constructive engagement with the various representatives who had attended.

65. The Anguilla Seminar had revealed that the representatives of most of the Territories who had attended as Heads of Government or Ministers had not been informed of their political options and had been under the mistaken impression that continued dependency or immediate independence were their only alternatives. They had clearly been ill-informed

and the United Nations must ensure that that situation was remedied.

66. The United Nations could carry out its mandate on decolonization only if there was a concerted focus on implementation. The legitimization of the current dependency arrangements for expediency's sake could not be an acceptable approach. The Caribbean Community looked forward to studying the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session on the implementation of resolutions relating to decolonization over the past 12 years since the declaration of the first International Decade in 1991. It did not expect the report to contain a mere recitation of replies from a fraction of Member States, as was generally the case with such reports; it expected it to encapsulate the activities of the United Nations system in carrying out its mandate, and indicate the difficulties encountered so that assistance could be rendered where necessary.

67. The international community must, in keeping with the Millennium Declaration, dedicate itself with renewed energy to helping peoples still under colonial domination to exercise their right to self-determination, as stated by the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session, Mr. Julian Hunte, a former chairman of the Special Committee on decolonization, when he had pointed out that many of the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories were located in the Caribbean. The Caribbean Community also endorsed the view expressed by the Heads of State or Government of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, meeting in Kuala Lumpur in February 2003, who had underlined the continued validity of the principle of the fundamental and inalienable right of peoples to self-determination and had renewed their commitment to hasten the complete elimination of colonialism and to support the effective implementation of the Plan of Action for the Decade.

68. Another crucial form of communication was for the representatives of the peoples themselves to deliver to the Special Committee on decolonization and to the Fourth Committee statements containing their first-hand assessment of the situation in the Territories. The proposal that agenda items on decolonization should be referred directly to the plenary once they had been considered by the Special Committee on decolonization, bypassing the Fourth Committee, was a source of grave concern to the Caribbean Community and other delegations. Such a move would deprive the representatives of the Territories of the opportunity they had always had to present their views to Member States. The colonial dilemma could not be resolved by limiting further the access of the peoples of the Territories to the very international process designed to help them. Such access should be enhanced, not limited. While the General Assembly certainly needed to be revitalized, the proposed move would be extremely unwise. The Caribbean Community urged that the reports of the Special Committee on decolonization should continue to be reviewed by the Fourth Committee, in which representatives of the Territories could furnish Member States with information on the situation on the ground. Every available instrument of mass dissemination of information was needed to overcome the continuing information deficit regarding decolonization.

69. On the question of Western Sahara, the Caribbean Community reaffirmed its support for the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy to enforce the peace plan so as to enable the Saharan people to exercise their right to self-determination, a principle which the Caribbean Community fully supported.

70. The Caribbean Community fully supported the draft resolution on the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and international institutions associated with the United Nations. It commended the United Nations Development Programme, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and other United Nations bodies for their consistent support to the Territories in their socio-economic and constitutional development. It regretted, however, that that important resolution had long been the subject of a number of abstentions within the Committee, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. The Caribbean Community hoped that consultations would yield consensus on a streamlined companion text that should be circulated for the consideration of the General Assembly.

71. **Mr. Pisa** (United Kingdom), speaking in the exercise of the right of reply to the statements made earlier by the representatives of Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela concerning the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands, said that his country's position was well known and that the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom had recently stated it in detail, in

writing, in the exercise of his right of reply to the statement made by the President of Argentina in the General Assembly on 25 September 2003.

Requests for hearings

72. **The Chairman** drew attention to aide-memoire No. 1/03 which reported 13 requests for hearings on the questions of Gibraltar, the Cayman Islands and Western Sahara. He suggested that, in accordance with the usual practice, the requests should be distributed as documents of the Committee and considered at a later meeting.

73. *It was so decided.*

74. **The Chairman** suggested that any further requests for hearings should be circulated as documents of the Committee and considered at the next meeting.

75. *It was so decided.*

76. **The Chairman** announced that he had received a communication from the Chief Minister of Gibraltar, who wished to address the Committee.

The meeting rose at 5.25 p.m.

United Nations A/C.4/58/SR.3

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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 3rd meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 7 October 2003, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Leodel ..... (Uruguay)

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03-54451 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Requests for hearings (A/C.4/58/2 and Add.1, A/C.4/58/3, A/C.4/58/4 and Add.1-9)

1. **The Chairman** drew the attention of Committee members to the requests for hearings relating to the question of Gibraltar, contained in documents A/C.4/58/2 and Add.1. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to grant the requests.

2. *It was so decided.*

3. **The Chairman** said that a request for a hearing relating to the question of the Cayman Islands was contained in document A/C.4/58/3. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to grant the request.

4. *It was so decided.*

5. **The Chairman** drew attention to 10 requests for hearings relating to the question of Western Sahara contained in documents A/C.4/58/4 and Add.1-9. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to grant those requests.

6. *It was so decided.*

Agenda item 19: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Territories not covered by another agenda item) (A/58/23 (part II), chap. VIII-X, A/58/23 (part III), chap. XII (sect. D-F), A/58/171; aide-mémoire 1/03)

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Agenda item 12: Report of the Economic and Social Council (A/58/23 (part II), chap. VI, A/57/23 (part III), chap. XII (sect. C), A/58/66; A/C.4/58/CRP.1)

Agenda item 90: Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories (A/58/71)

7. **Mr. Zulu Kilo-Abi** (Democratic Republic of the Congo) said that, despite the tangible progress achieved in the area of decolonization, the way ahead was still strewn with obstacles. With a view overcoming those obstacles, he urged the administering Powers to take an active part in the work of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, and to authorize United Nations visiting missions to go to the Non-Self-Governing Territories on a regular basis. He also urged United Nations bodies and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to participate actively in development projects in the Non-Self-Governing Territories. He called upon the international community to promote consciousness-raising and information activities regarding the situation in the Non-Self-Governing Territories, not only for the peoples directly concerned, but also for other peoples around the world, so that they could take an active part each year in the Week of Solidarity with the Peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories. Lastly, he called for the rapid and effective implementation of the plan of action contained in document A/56/61. In conclusion, he reminded all Member States that the effective enjoyment of economic, social, and cultural rights found no more eloquent expression than in the genuine exercise of the inalienable rights to self-determination and independence.

8. **Mr. Ononye** (Nigeria) said that every effort should be made to avoid delay in granting independence to the Non-Self-Governing Territories. He called on the administering Powers to be more sensitive to the legitimate aspirations of the peoples of those Territories. He reaffirmed his delegation's full

support for all resolutions and efforts aimed at the complete elimination of colonialism.

9. With respect to Western Sahara, his delegation reaffirmed its support for the referendum process sponsored by the United Nations and the African Union. The United Nations/African Union Settlement Plan, which formed the basis for Nigeria's participation in the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) process, was the only guarantee of the right to self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. He welcomed the adoption of Security Council resolution 1495 (2003) by which the Council stressed its support for the peace plan for the self-determination of Western Sahara.

10. **Mr. Baali** (Algeria) said that if there was one area where the Organization had enjoyed undeniable success, of which it could legitimately be proud, it was certainly decolonization. Nevertheless, the people of 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories remained under foreign occupation or administration in various regions of the world and were waiting to exercise their sacred right to self-determination like other peoples. That was the case for the people of Western Sahara, whose decolonization process had been littered with obstacles.

11. The referendum process provided for in the Settlement Plan negotiated under the auspices of the United Nations, relaunched by the famous Houston Accords, had once again stalled, the appeals process having been transformed into an identification process. The Framework Agreement on the Status of Western Sahara, which offered very limited autonomy, had not been accepted by the Security Council which had requested the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General to submit to it a new proposal on the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. The peace plan for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara submitted by Mr. James Baker in January 2003, to the parties and the neighbouring States, was, from that point of view, an honest and balanced approach which provided a satisfactory response to the mandate given to the Personal Envoy by the Security Council in resolution 1429 (2002). His delegation strongly supported that plan and was prepared, as requested in Security Council resolution 1495 (2003), to continue to cooperate, in its capacity as a neighbouring State, with the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy with a view to ensuring the success of the proposed solution, now that the international community, through the Security Council, had given it its full support. His delegation expected the Fourth Committee and the General Assembly, which had always supported the right of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination, to provide their full support to the peace plan for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara and to join with the Security Council in ensuring that the plan was implemented as rapidly as possible in order that the people of Western Sahara could become masters of their own fate and that harmony would once again prevail in the region.

12. **Mr. Nambiar** (India) said that, although decolonization had truly been a success story of the United Nations, the General Assembly, in resolution 55/146 of December 2000, had nonetheless declared the period 2001-2010 the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. The remaining 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories served as constant reminders that decolonization was as yet incomplete. The Organization must redouble its efforts to ensure that that chapter was finally relegated to the pages of history.

13. First, it was important to pay special attention to the needs of the peoples of the Territories themselves, by finding the appropriate format and timing for the completion of decolonization in each Territory. Second, the administering Powers must work with the Special Committee in a spirit of cooperation, political realism and flexibility. The co_eration of the Government of New Zealand with the recent United Nations visiting mission to Tokelau and the support of the United Kingdom in organizing the Caribbean Regional Seminar, held for the first time in a Non-Self-Governing Territory, Anguilla, were examples of such cooperation. More United Nations visiting missions should be sent to the Territories in order to gather first-hand information about the conditions in the Territories and the wishes and aspirations of their peoples concerning their future status. Similarly, he looked forward to the holding of more seminars in the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

14. As a founding member of the United Nations and the Special Committee, India rededicated itself to the noble ideals enshrined in the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples and reaffirmed its commitment to the achievement of the goal of decolonization.

15. **Mr. Mackay** (New Zealand) welcomed the opportunity to discuss recent developments with regard

to Tokelau, a Non-Self-Governing Territory for which New Zealand continued to have responsibility. Since the previous year, the "relationship framework" had developed into a document called the Joint Statement on the Principles of Partnership between New Zealand and Tokelau, a document which was of a political rather than a legal nature and was intended to give the Territory some certainty and confidence as it worked towards self-determination. The Tokelau General Fono and the New Zealand Government had approved the text of the statement, which would be signed in Tokelau later in the year.

16. Agreement had also been reached on the establishment of the Tokelau Trust Fund, to which New Zealand and Tokelau had already contributed more than $NZ 6 million (US$ 3.6 million). In July 2003, Tokelau had assumed responsibility for its entire budget. A member of the New Zealand Public Service was undertaking a two-year assignment with the Tokelau Public Service to assist with the setting up of new financial management systems and the training of staff.

17. At the same time, the General Fono had discussed a proposal that the Administrator's powers should be delegated to the Village Councils, instead of the General Fono as was currently the case. The General Fono had agreed to set 30 June 2004 as the target date for the transfer of those powers. If all went well, on 1 July 2004 the three Village Councils would be given responsibility for the full range of public services at the village level. In turn, the Village Councils would delegate to the General Fono responsibility for decision-making at the national level. In close consultation with the three Village Councils and with the support of the General Fono, a Commission of Inquiry was currently reviewing the capacity of the Village Councils to manage their public services in key areas such as health, education, economic development and shipping. Specialist New Zealand advisers were providing assistance to the Public Service of Tokelau in areas such as health, education, fisheries and economic development. The strengthening of the capacity of their public services should strengthen the confidence of the people of Tokelau in their own institutions and encourage them to move towards an act of self-determination.

18. An early requirement was to develop information material on the three options available to Non-Self-Governing Territories: integration, self-government in free association, and independence. His Government, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), would be working to bring information material together in a suitable way as soon as possible. Tokelau was participating in that process and it was heartening to see that a series of constitutional workshops had been organized and that further workshops and other consultations would follow the development of the information material concerning the three options.

19. **Ms. Mulamula** (Republic of Tanzania), said that, as a member of the Special Committee on decolonization, her delegation associated itself with the Special Committee's report. She underscored the symbolic value of the Seminar, which had been held for the first time in a Non-Self-Governing Territory — Anguilla — with the consent of the administering Power. That was an achievement which should be emulated. It was a truism to state that, without the engagement of the administering Powers, the efforts of the Special Committee would be an exercise in futility. With that in mind, the administering Powers should work in partnership with the Special Committee to push the decolonization process forward. In that way the work of the General Assembly with respect to decolonization would be revitalized and there would be no need to abandon the Special Committee, whose agenda remained unfinished.

20. The United Nations should revise its approach as it had been challenged to do by the elected representatives of the people of Anguilla, by devising a mechanism for the practical implementation of the Declaration. In that regard, the Special Committee had developed a programme of action on the basis of a case-by-case work programme, setting out the targets for dealing with the 16 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories before the end of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism.

21. The question of Western Sahara, the last bastion of colonialism in Africa, remained a formidable challenge. It was her country's position that the right to self-determination of the people of Western Sahara could not be compromised through political expediency. The only viable solution was the holding of a referendum, as agreed by both parties. The road map to peace already existed. The latest proposal of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy offered a way forward. What was required was a show of political will by the parties. The international community had to rise to the occasion by supporting

the aspirations of the Saharan people who had so far been denied of their right to self-determination. The time had come for the Organization to act if it was to maintain its credibility in the defence of peace and justice.

22. It was evident from the Anguilla Seminar that the people in the Non-Self-Governing Territories and their elected representatives were not fully aware of the options available to them in exercising their right to self-determination. They needed to be educated on those options so that they could make an informed decision. It was up to them alone to decide on the kind of future they wanted. The Department of Public Information should do more to disseminate information on the role of the Organization in advancing the process of decolonization.

23. The recommendations of the Anguilla Seminar and other regional seminars and visiting missions needed to be fully integrated into the work of the General Assembly. Visiting missions were of prime importance since they provided an opportunity to review the developments in those Territories and educate the people on the options available to them. Attempts to stifle such missions would undermine the mandate of the Committee and the role of the United Nations. No effort should therefore be spared to defeat those attempts.

24. In conclusion, her delegation wished to underscore the fact that the decolonization agenda would have been completed if the administering Powers had lived up to their obligations under the Charter. The issue at stake was self-determination; the people of the Non-Self-Governing Territories should be given the opportunity to make an informed choice.

25. **Ms. Shiweva** (Namibia) said that since the decolonization of East Timor in 2002, no significant progress had been made in the rest of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. The Special Committee had, however, maintained its tireless efforts towards the implementation of the resolutions of the General Assembly. One of the main objectives of the United Nations was to promote decolonization in the Non-Self-Governing Territories. His delegation regretted that, under the pretext of the revitalization of the United Nations system, some parties sought to do away with the Fourth Committee, a move that was aimed at undermining the decolonization process and diverting the United Nations from its important agenda.

26. Having had the same experience, Namibia stood firm in its support of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories in their quest for freedom and independence under the auspices of the United Nations.

27. The question of Western Sahara remained a serious concern to Namibia and to Africa as a whole, and, in particular, to the people of Western Sahara who for almost three decades had continued to suffer under foreign occupation. Their aspirations to freedom and independence must be fully supported by Member States.

28. His delegation reiterated its support for the Secretary-General, his Personal Envoy, his Special Representative and the MINURSO team for their tireless efforts to secure a just and peaceful solution to the question of Western Sahara on the basis of the United Nations Settlement Plan. It called on the parties to accept and implement the Baker proposal without delay as it represented a viable solution to the peaceful settlement of the question of Western Sahara.

29. The people of the Non-Self-Governing Territories had placed high hopes and expectations in the United Nations to make freedom and independence a reality for all the peoples of the world. That was an obligation under the Charter and must be fully implemented.

30. **Mr. Musambachime** (Zambia) said that his country continued to strongly support the process of decolonization and the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. People all over the world should be free and should enjoy the inalienable right to self-determination and independence. He wished to commend the tireless efforts of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, which had culminated in the 1997 Houston Accords and the detailed implementation plan submitted by the Secretary-General which envisaged the holding of a referendum on 7 December 1998, but regretted that the parties had not rewarded him for his efforts.

31. For Zambia, the question of Western Sahara remained a decolonization issue. Western Sahara was not a province of any country, but a country colonized by another. Since 1965, the General Assembly had consistently reaffirmed the inalienable right of the Saharan people to self-determination and independence.

32. Zambia remained convinced that the United Nations Settlement Plan was the only framework which would allow the Saharan people to exercise that right. Despite that conviction, it welcomed the new peace plan proposed by the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, because it created a new momentum which should lead to a fair and lasting settlement of the conflict. The people of Western Sahara should be allowed to exercise freely their right to self-determination, and should not be forced into incorporation. Zambia would continue to support the wishes of the Saharan people for self-determination and independence.

33. **Mr. Yahya** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) recalled that the General Assembly, in resolution 146/55, had declared the period 2001-2010 the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism and had called upon Member States to redouble their efforts to implement the plan of action contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/56/61). However, little had been done. He welcomed the fact that the United Kingdom had cooperated in the organization of the Seminar held in Anguilla, in the Caribbean region, from 20 to 22 May 2003 and that New Zealand had shown its willingness to collaborate with the United Nations on the question of Tokelau by authorizing a visiting mission to the region in 2002 in order to observe at first hand the situation on the ground. However, as the representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories had pointed out at the Seminar in Anguilla, much remained to be done by the administering Powers, since they had to take specific measures to ensure that power would be transferred to the Territories. In that connection, significant economic, technical and cultural assistance would be required in order to establish the institutions and infrastructure that would allow them to be self-governing and achieve independence.

34. As far as the Trust Territories were concerned, it was important that the administering Powers should offer the people of those Territories a genuine opportunity to assess their aspirations to freedom and independence and make a choice rather than seek to bind them definitively with laws that would convert them into citizens of those States. The right of peoples to self-determination was sacred and efforts should be made to ensure that the peoples concerned could achieve their aspirations. To that end, he called on the countries concerned to take into consideration the recommendations made at Anguilla.

35. Until those peoples were able to exercise their right to self-determination, the administering Powers must refrain from carrying out military exercises within the Territories and from using them as military bases, particularly for the carrying out of attacks against other States. They must also conserve the environment and the mineral resources of the Territories and exploit them in the interests of the people of the Territories, who must be treated in accordance with international law and customs.

36. In conclusion, he said that he supported the idea of providing the Special Committee with the means to carry out the mandate entrusted to it by the General Assembly and would oppose any attempts to weaken it.

37. *Ms. Ognjanovac (Croatia) took the Chair.*

38. **Mr. Kabtani** (Tunisia) said that the accession to national sovereignty of over one hundred countries during the past four decades represented a significant achievement for the United Nations. However, although considerable progress had been made over the past decade in the eradication of colonialism, much remained to be done in order to eliminate that scourge completely. The Special Committee on decolonization still had a significant role to play in that connection.

39. The declaration of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism provided an important political framework designed to support the efforts of the international community and, with the support of the United Nations, the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and the administering Powers, to assist those Territories to exercise their right to self-determination.

40. It was also useful to strengthen cooperation between the Special Committee and the administering Powers with a view to finding innovative methods of revitalizing the process of decolonization in the remaining 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories and enabling the United Nations to close that unfinished chapter of history.

41. His delegation urged the Department of Public Information to make additional efforts to disseminate information that was more targeted towards the populations of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and focused on the choices available to them. The dissemination of information, the sending of missions

to the Territories and the holding of regional seminars were all effective ways of ascertaining the aspirations of the local populations. In that connection, he welcomed the success of the most recent regional Seminar, which had been held in Anguilla from 20 to 22 May 2003.

42. The work of decolonization, which was the responsibility of the international community, needed to be imbued with new life, and it was to be hoped that the international community would step up its efforts to that end, thereby enabling it to devote more time to the challenges of the new millennium.

43. **Mr. Kumalo** (South Africa) said that, despite many General Assembly resolutions and the intensive efforts of the international community, the question of Western Sahara remained on the agenda. The past year had been marked by the full realization of the right to self-determination and independence by the people of Timor-Leste. It would be wonderful if, at its next session, the Committee could celebrate the realization by the people of Western Sahara of their right to self-determination.

44. The existence of a working relationship between Western Sahara and Morocco and the release of over 200 Moroccan detainees by the Frente POLISARIO was a source of optimism for his delegation. The Frente POLISARIO should be congratulated on having taken that important step towards peace, but Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO must cooperate further with the International Committee of the Red Cross to determine the fate of persons unaccounted for since the beginning of the conflict. The resolution of that outstanding matter would only help to build confidence. It was to be hoped that at its fifty-eighth session the General Assembly would use its political will to bring about a just and lasting solution to the question of Western Sahara.

45. His delegation welcomed Security Council resolution 1495 (2003) of 31 July 2003, which should make it possible to resume negotiations with a view to achieving that aim. It also supported the peace plan presented by the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy and endorsed the Secretary-General's call to all parties to act constructively in order to implement it.

46. His delegation was also deeply concerned about the escalation of violence in the Middle East and urged the international community to bring it to an end. Israel must fully implement all General Assembly and Security Council resolutions by putting an end to foreign occupation so that the Palestinian people could realize its inalienable right to self-determination. The only way to guarantee peace was to have two States living side by side, with Jerusalem as their capital, each enjoying full sovereignty and secure borders.

47. In conclusion, he wished to reiterate that, because of South Africa's commitment to the ideals of self-determination and independence and the realization of the wishes of the peoples, it attached particular importance to the restoration to Iraq of its political independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. The right to self-determination was the best guarantee of peace among nations.

48. **Mr. Guterres** (Timor-Leste), speaking for the first time in the Fourth Committee since his country's accession to independence, thanked the Secretariat for its excellent work, professionalism and commitment. Thanks to the efforts of many countries, political and religious leaders, non-governmental organizations, the United Nations and the people of his country, Timor-Leste had become a free and democratic country.

49. The Fourth Committee had been remarkably successful. There were still 16 countries on the list, most of them vulnerable island States in the Pacific and Caribbean regions, whose exercise of the right to self-determination should be promoted.

50. The report of the Special Committee (A/58/23) highlighted some progress made by the administering Powers and some new initiatives. His delegation welcomed the visit of the United Nations mission to Tokelau at the invitation of New Zealand and the representatives of the Territory. It also congratulated the United Kingdom and Anguilla on having organized the successful regional Seminar. Such historic initiatives contributed to a better understanding of the needs and aspirations of peoples under colonial rule by creating the visibility needed in a very competitive globalized world. The role played by the administering Power had been crucial in Timor-Leste's accession to independence.

51. It was to be hoped that by the end of the second Decade the work of decolonization would have been completed and that colonial countries and peoples would be enjoying their sovereign rights.

52. With regard to Western Sahara, his delegation, which had been closely following the struggle of the

Saharan people since the 1970s, welcomed the fact that the leaders of the Frente POLISARIO had accepted the Baker plan. He commended the former Secretary of State for his role in bringing peace to that volatile region. His delegation also welcomed the decision by the leaders of the Frente POLISARIO to release a new group of Moroccan prisoners of war, and the fact that both sides were maintaining the ceasefire.

53. In conclusion, his delegation appealed to the Secretary-General and the Security Council to continue to search for a solution in conformity with international law and United Nations resolutions.

54. **Mr. Moungara-Moussotsi** (Gabon) expressed his appreciation to the Secretary-General for having worked so hard to find a negotiated and lasting political solution that could be accepted by the parties concerned with a view to the achievement of a just and lasting settlement of the problem of Western Sahara, in particular for having proposed the draft Framework Agreement in June 2001 which would give the population of Western Sahara the right to elect their own executive and legislative bodies and to exercise exclusive competence in certain areas. That draft had, however, been accepted only by the Kingdom of Morocco.

55. His delegation saw merit in the peace plan proposed in January 2003 but considered it somewhat risky and therefore difficult to implement. The General Assembly could only encourage the parties to continue their negotiations so as to arrive at a mutually acceptable solution, without interfering with the mission entrusted by the Security Council to the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy.

56. **Mr. Sengi** (Papua New Guinea) said that the record of the first International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism had left much to be desired. However, with the full cooperation of all the administering Powers and States Members of the United Nations, the work programmes for each of the 16 remaining Territories could be completed before the end of the new Decade. All the parties concerned needed to think harder and work out ways of helping subjugated peoples to rid themselves of the yoke of colonialism.

57. In that regard, his Government fully supported the work programmes developed for each Territory, which should enable the peoples of the Territories to determine their own future.

58. The experiences of New Caledonia and Tokelau should serve as a guide for cooperation between the Special Committee and the administering Powers. His delegation hoped that the same constructive spirit shown by the United States of America and the United Kingdom as the administering Powers would be forthcoming with respect to the other Territories under their respective jurisdictions.

59. The United Nations mission that had visited Tokelau in 2002 had been able to determine the political will of the population.

60. The Special Committee had also initiated informal consultations with the United States and the United Kingdom regarding American Samoa, Guam, Pitcairn, Anguilla, the Cayman Islands, the Turks and Caicos Islands, Saint Helena and other Territories in the Pacific and Caribbean regions.

61. Work on New Caledonia had started under the Noumea Accords and was progressing with the support of the leaders of the Pacific Island Forum. The Special Committee and States Members of the United Nations should also work to ensure that the Kanak people were able to exercise their right to self-determination.

62. With regard to Western Sahara, his delegation believed that only the political will of the parties concerned would enable the process to move forward. The parties must put the interests of the Saharan people ahead of anything else in order to allow them to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination.

63. His delegation fully supported the proposals for the reforms and restructuring of the United Nations, but felt that they must be carried out comprehensively and with the agreement of Member States. Any revitalization or reform of the United Nations must seek to strengthen the work of the Organization and not to undo the work already accomplished. The interests of the peoples of the 16 Non-Self Governing Territories must not be sacrificed on the altar of reform.

64. In conclusion, he said that, since the second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism would end in 2010, the Special Committee had only seven years left in which to complete the work of decolonization in respect of the remaining 16 Territories. It therefore needed to get down to that task.

The meeting rose at 5.05 p.m.